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MESSAGE REJECTED - CONTAINS UNRECOGNIZED ORIGINATOR
-- ERRORED MESSAGE FOLLOWS --
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ZNR UUUUU ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY PODGORICA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC
INFO EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PODGORICA 000223

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MW](#)
SUBJECT: MONTENEGRO DIVIDED ON NATO

REF: A. A) PODGORICA 154

[1](#)B. B) PODGORICA 140

PODGORICA 00000223 001.3 OF 002

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED - PLEASE HANDLE ACCORDINGLY

[1](#)1. THIS IS AN ACTION CABLE. PLEASE SEE PARAGRAPH SIX.

[1](#)2. (SBU) SUMMARY: RECENT PUBLIC OPINION POLLS SHOW MONTENEGRO STILL DIVIDED ON THE PROSPECT OF NATO MEMBERSHIP. WITH ONE POLL ACTUALLY SHOWING OPPONENTS OUTNUMBERING SUPPORTERS, THE GOM IS LOOKING TO REORGANIZE ITS APPROACH ON THE ISSUE TO CITIZENS, TO COUNTER BOTH THE LACK OF INFORMATION AND MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT NATO. THE GOM HAS MADE CONTACT WITH THE NATO INTERNATIONAL STAFF AND THE U.S. EMBASSY, LOOKING FOR SUPPORT IN DEVISING A MORE EFFECTIVE OUTREACH CAMPAIGN. END SUMMARY.

POLLS SHOW SUPPORT FOR NATO SLIPPING

[1](#)3. (U) ACCORDING TO THE JUNE 2007 PUBLIC OPINION POLL CONDUCTED BY THE CENTER FOR DEMOCRACY (CEDEM), 32.9 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS SUPPORTED MONTENEGRO'S ACCESSION TO NATO WHILE 39.7 PERCENT WERE OPPOSED, A SIX PERCENT DECLINE IN SUPPORT FROM THE FEBRUARY 2007 POLL.

[1](#)4. (U) ANOTHER JUNE POLL, FROM THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE (NDI), SHOWED THAT 53 PERCENT BELIEVE THAT A DECISION TO JOIN NATO SHOULD BE MADE BY REFERENDUM, WHILE 38 PERCENT BELIEVE THAT THE DECISION SHOULD BE MADE IN PARLIAMENT. RESPONDENTS WERE ALSO

ASKED WHAT NATO ACCESSION WOULD MEAN FOR MONTENEGRO:

PERCENT

20 FIGHT OTHERS WARS
15 STEP TOWARD EU
12 AID DEFENSE/SECURITY SECTORS
12 MORE INVESTMENT
10 DAMAGE TO TOURISM
32 DON'T KNOW/NO ANSWER

OPPOSITION TO GOM HURTING NATO IMAGE

15. (SBU) THE DECLINE IN NATO SUPPORT FOLLOWS A PERIOD IN WHICH THE POLITICAL OPPOSITION HAS BEEN HAMMERING THE GOM ON ITS HANDLING OF DEFENSE ISSUES, SHARPLY CRITICIZING THE "NON-TRANSPARENT MANNER" IN WHICH THE GOM CONCLUDED A SOFA AND AN "ARTICLE 98" AGREEMENT WITH THE USG (REF A). EXCEPT FOR THE MINISCULE LIBERAL PARTY (1 SEAT IN THE 81 SEAT PARLIAMENT), THE OPPOSITION ATTACKS ARE NOT MOTIVATED BY ANTIPATHY TO NATO AS MUCH AS ENMITY TOWARDS THE GOVERNMENT. POST NOTES THE LEADER OF THE SERBIAN LIST, ANDRIJA MANDIC, HAS TOLD US THAT HE WOULD LIKE TO SEE HIS PARTY COME OUT IN SUPPORT OF NATO MEMBERSHIP (REF B), AND VISITED THE USS EMORY S. LAND ON MAY 21 DURING ITS VISIT TO MONTENEGRO. HE WAS THE ONLY SENIOR POLITICAL PARTY LEADER TO ATTEND THE SHIPBOARD RECEPTION.

ASSISTANCE IN SHAPING NEW APPROACH SOUGHT

16. (SBU) IN A JUNE 25 MEETING WITH CHARGE, FM ROCEN WAS SHARPLY CRITICAL OF WHAT HE VIEWS AS THE INEFFECTIVE ROLE BEING PLAYED BY SAVO KENTERA, SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE EURO-ATLANTIC CLUB OF B T
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MONTENEGRO, THE ASSOCIATE MEMBER OF THE ATLANTIC TREATY ASSOCIATION FOR MONTENEGRO. THE MINISTER SAID HE HAS ASKED FOR ASSISTANCE FROM THE NATO INTERNATIONAL STAFF IN SHAPING A NEW PUBLIC RELATIONS APPROACH, PART OF WHICH WOULD INCLUDE COMMON POINTS TO BE MADE BY ALL GOM MINISTERS AND OFFICIALS. HE ALSO SPECIFICALLY REQUESTED US ASSISTANCE IN DEVELOPING A GOVERNMENT WIDE NATO COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY. CHARGE AGREED TO PASS HIS REQUEST TO WASHINGTON.

COMMENT

17. (SBU) RECENT EVENTS, INCLUDING THE DOWNTURN IN SUPPORT FOR NATO, CONTROVERSY OVER THE U.S.-MONTENEGRO SOFA AND STRONG

PUBLIC PRESSURE LEADING TO CANCELLATION OF THE PRIVATIZATION OF THE LARGEST POWER PLANT, HAVE UNDERScoreD THE GOM'S FAILURE TO INTEGRATE A STRONG PUBLIC OUTREACH COMPONENT IN ITS POST-INDEPENDENCE EFFORTS. ROCEN'S COMMENTS INDICATE THAT SOME WITHIN THE GOM ARE STARTING TO RECOGNIZE THAT OMISSION; HOWEVER, AS SHOWN BY ROCEN'S OTHER COMMENTS DISPARAGING OPPOSITION LEADER MANDIC (SEPTTEL), THERE IS STILL A STRONG RESISTANCE TO MAKING TACTICAL POLITICAL ALLIANCES TO ADVANCE PROGRESS ON ISSUES OF CENTRAL CONCERN TO THE GOM.

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